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TOWARDS METAMODERNISM: COLETTE LANGLOIS'S "THE EMIGRANTS"¹

Abstract

In the context of Canada's history, migrations have always played an exceptional role. From the times the first colonies were started in the north American continent to the present moment, Canada has been dependent on the workforce and know-how which come with the influx of migrants from Europe and elsewhere. The hardships of early colonists as much as the problems of modern-day immigrants mark the history of Canada and give it specificities which distinguish it from many countries with a longer history. The next step in its development, in view of the global climate change and the necessary search for new habitats, may be joining the space-race and sending emigrants in spaceships to discover and colonise new planets.

In her short story "The Emigrants" (2015) Colette Langlois encompasses the whole history of Canadian migrations through a dual narrative spanning the period from 1885 to the projected 2070 and showing pioneering efforts of two relatives: an English farmer making his homestead in Red Jacket, Assiniboia East, and his distant cousin, an abandoned female astronaut living her last days on Mars. Both are illustrative of Promised Land narratives which mark the 19th and the 21st centuries, showing that Lyotard's concern for the post-modern condition of humanity characterized, among other things, by the lack of grand narratives, was short-lived. The aim of the paper is to explore these two metanarratives, the American Promised Land and outer space as a promised land, in order to show similarities

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¹ This research was supported by Project 178014 granted by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, and by the English Department, Faculty of Philology and Journalism, Samara National Research University, Samara, Russia.

and continuity despite the postmodern disruption, referring to Jean-François Lyotard on the one hand and Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker on the other. The conclusion based on Langlois's "The Emigrants" points to a turn away from the Postmodern plurality of small narratives towards an emerging Metamodern grand narrative.

Keywords

migrations, Canada, space, Postmodernism, Metamodernism, "The Emigrants," Colette Langlois.

1.0 Introduction: Emigrants, Migrants, Immigrants, Settlers

If anything characterizes Canadian history, it is migrations. From the moment the North American continent was (re)discovered in 1492 to any foreseeable future, Canada has been depending on the workforce and know-how which come with the influx of migrants from Europe and elsewhere. Canadian poetry can offer precise insights into the whole process, from its beginnings to the present times, an example of which can be Margaret Atwood's poem "Further Arrivals":

After we had crossed the long illness
that was the ocean, we sailed up-river

On the first island
the immigrants threw off their clothes
and danced like sandflies

We left behind one by one
the cities rotting with cholera,
one by one our civilized
distinctions

and entered a large darkness. (Atwood 2002: 784–5)

The reasons these various emigrants left their homelands are well-known: lack of economic opportunities, religious and political persecution, land shortages, famine, wars, rising taxes, and general poverty, which Atwood figuratively expresses in phrases "cities rotting with cholera" and "civilized distinctions." The privations of the sea journey are again given in one elegant collocation "the long illness" which includes sea-sickness, as well as malnutrition and diseases on board highly over-crowded, unsanitary and foul-smelling ships. Those who survived "danced like sandflies" for joy to be able to step on solid ground, wash themselves and their clothes, and begin their new life in the promised land. What happens in the "large darkness" of Canadian wilderness is outlined in F. R. Scott's "Laurentian Shield:"

The first cry was the hunter, hungry for fur,
 And the digger for gold, nomad, no-man, a particle;
 Then the bold commands of monopoly, big with machines,
 Carving its kingdoms out of the public wealth;
 And now the drone of the plane, scouting the ice,
 Fills all the emptiness with neighbourhood
 And links our future over the vanished pole. (Scott 1982: 95)

In the first two centuries the trappers and gold diggers, reduced to mere particles in the huge space of Canada, dehumanized by hard work, harsh living conditions, and homelessness, struggled to survive while striving to get rich. When beaver and gold were exhausted as resources, these early nomads were replaced by organized corporations, holding monopoly over other treasured riches: timber, fish, minerals, natural gas, and oil whose exploitation continues to this day. The population grew with the development of technology, and most of the hardships of early settlers now echo with epic nostalgia. Most of all, notorious distances of Canadian geography are soon made reasonable by various transportation means, the CPR being the first. Presciently, at the turn of the 19th century, Scott anticipates the arrival of modern economic and brain-drain migrants who all have the same motivation:

Will come, presently, tomorrow,
 From millions whose hands can turn this rock into children. (Scott 1982: 95)

Millions have indeed arrived and will keep arriving as long as Canada maintains the image of the promised land.

2.0 The Promised Land as a Grand Narrative

Jean-François Lyotard has definitely brought the term 'grand narrative' into prominence since 1979 and onwards, allegedly writing a report on knowledge but obviously mudding the critical waters for a few decades. Within the context of poststructuralism, and in an attempt to distinguish between modernism and postmodernism, he deploys the term 'grand narrative' without going into much detail concerning the pattern of such a narrative, except for noticing the assumed absence of its main elements in postmodernism, "its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal" (Lyotard 1979: xxiv), which happen to be the elements of the quest myth. His commissioned task being to write a report on the present state of knowledge (mid-20th century), Lyotard first identifies the general "breaking up of the grand Narratives" (Lyotard 1979: 15) and then "the decline of the unifying and legitimating power of the grand narratives of speculation and emancipation" (Lyotard 1979: 38), as the two cardinal narratives of legitimation of knowledge and its institutions. Without going into great detail, and despite the immense influence that Lyotard's *The*

Postmodern Condition (1979) exerted, strong disagreement with his conclusion can be supported with the comments of many critics. Namely, Lyotard contends:

We no longer have recourse to the grand narratives – we can resort neither to the dialectic of Spirit nor even to the emancipation of humanity as a validation for postmodern scientific discourse. (Lyotard 1979: 60)

Not even Lyotard held this view for long because metanarratives of progress, emancipation and knowledge are definitely timeless (in the context of Western civilization), and as James K. A. Smith claims: “Postmodernism is not incredulity toward narrative or myth; on the contrary, it unveils that all knowledge is grounded in such” (Smith 2006: 69). Contradicting his previous claim, Lyotard himself affirms narrative as “a central instance of the human mind” (Jameson 1979: xi), and does not manage to belittle its significance in the postmodern age.

Referring to Lyotard’s concepts of emancipation and speculation in particular, we will discuss the metanarrative of ‘the promised land’ to show that “buried master-narratives” (Jameson 1979: xii) persist, changing in the course of time yet remaining exceptionally relevant to mankind. Roger C. Aden offers a pertinent explanation of what ‘the promised land’ may mean:

By “promised lands,” I mean the symbolic visions shared by a culture that provide a destination unique to the culture, where the members of the culture expect to find ultimate fulfillment. Typically the promised land is envisioned as the geographic contextualization of a grand narrative’s Idea, the place in which individuals would find themselves once the Idea is realized. (Aden 2007: 4)

Aden is referring to Lyotard’s distinction between myth and grand narrative where the mythical narrative looks to the past while the grand narrative focuses on the future, with origins or ends as their respective concerns. Therefore, the Promised Land as a grand narrative belongs in the emancipatory category, according to Lyotard, implying the story of the subject’s “emancipation from everything that prevents it from governing itself” (Lyotard 1979: 35). In the post-Renaissance and soon-to-be-industrialised Europe, political, religious, and/or economic emancipation was the motive which drove millions of people to move in order to find a new habitus where the ideals of the old one would be realized. In view of this, the Promised Land is “a locus of desire” (Lippard 1997: 4), a geographical space which becomes place and consequently home, a destination with symbolic significance and great portent. The Promised Land is the location at the end of a movement caused by a grand narrative where the emancipated immigrants can ultimately govern themselves. In the geographic space of the North American continent, the driving Idea is realized in two forms to fulfill the desire for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (USA), and to fulfill the desire for peace, order, and good government (Canada). In both

forms, the grand narrative of the Promised Land was so attractive and alluring that millions, "whose hands can turn this rock into children" (Scott 1982: 95), ventured into the unknown.

The grand narrative of emancipation accordingly provides "a fitting framework for developing broad projects of an ideal social order" (Stemplewska-Żakowicz 2000: 81) which characterizes pre-modern discourses. Hence, within the largest ideological context of only one Truth obvious to everybody, the settler colonisers of early Canada (and America) developed the grand narrative of the Promised Land which allowed for self-actualisation through self-reliance and hard work. Their socially negotiated consensus reality was seen as a sacred garden where complete emancipation could be reached, regardless of the costs. Progress was initially envisioned mainly in religious terms, as personal improvement, but Canadian vast distances soon imposed a new vision of a technological progress that could create a secular paradise. The building of the CPR as the first major national project introduces the modern scientific age into the untouched wilderness of Canada, and promises fulfillment in the secular utopia of this life. Aden explains the change of collective narratives for the context of the North American continent:

In the United States, then, two grand narratives of progress/spirit seem to have dominated: (1) a founding story that featured the "settling" of the nation as the establishment of a sacred garden where God's work was done, and (2) a story of maturation that featured the "development" of the nation as the establishment of a secular utopia where the work of machines provided plentiful goods. The first narrative called upon self-sacrifice for community development, whereas the second narrative called upon machines to provide for self-development. (Aden 2007: 18)

The transition from the rural to the industrial economy is corroborated by the narrative pictures of changing social reality. In Lyotard's terms, the life of the spirit supersedes the emancipation of humanity as the grand narrative of legitimation, and scientific discourse as a speculative narrative is now so firmly rooted that its legitimation is no longer necessary. The social bond developing at the moment is the one motivated by space-race where space emerges as the next locus of desire with new crowds of emigrants soon to set out and colonise Mars, and probably other planets of our Solar System. The frontier now takes a vertical shift and lifts towards the cosmos. The Promised Land of both the sacred garden and its follower the secular paradise having failed mankind in view of the imminent global disaster, new spaces are actively sought and new Promised Lands imagined. This is exactly what Colette Langlois envisioned in her short story "The Emigrants" (2015).

3.0 From the American Dream to Terraforming Mars

The dual narrative pattern of “The Emigrants” accommodates two time frames, from September 8, 1885 to October 24, 1889, and from 31.03.2070 to 12.04.2070. It also introduces two different settings, Red Jacket, Assiniboia East, and Mars station 1, as well as two different, though related narrators, a successful settler farmer of the 19th century Canada and his descendent, a female astronaut on a failed mission to Mars. Both are appropriately unnamed, except for an abbreviation J.M.B. with which the male farmer narrator signs his infrequent letters to his sister, and the usual cmb, used by the female astronaut narrator at the end of her reports. The epistolary technique of the story gives rise to interpretations centring on the significance of communication, both protagonists being worlds apart from those they cared for. The farmer’s sister lives in England which is no closer to him in Red Jacket, Canada than Headquarters on Earth is to the astronaut on Mars. The habit to communicate and share everyday experiences helps them maintain their humanity despite the dehumanizing conditions in which they have to live, and despite the uncertainty if their messages may ever reach the desired destinations. Further, their different genders and consequent approaches to existential problems allow for the possibility to read the story along the lines of gender studies. Gendered representations of their realities are evident, the man being focused mainly on physical survival and material prosperity while the woman is mostly concerned with establishing spiritual harmony with her deceased companions. However stereotypical, these gender differences shape daily practices and life goals of the two protagonists. Further, this awarded story can be also interpreted as illustrating the shifting frontiers of the Promised Land and the perseverance of the grand narrative of emancipation in its fusion with the grand narrative of speculation to contradict Lyotard’s “decline of the unifying and legitimating power of the grand narratives of speculation and emancipation” (Lyotard 1979: 38).

3.1 The American Dream: “*I have discovered my home*”

Colette Langlois just hinted at the geographical location of the settler farmer who heads every letter to his sister in England by quoting the location of his farm and the current date which, nevertheless, provides enough information to locate the family physically and historically. They are envisioned as part of the immigration boom which marked the end of the 19th century leading up to 1914, as explained by Erica Gagnon (2012):

Significant changes occurred in Canada after 1867 that made the Prairie immigration boom possible: the construction of a transcontinental railroad made transportation and travel accessible; the Dominion Lands Act of 1872 created free and fertile homesteads for settlers; the establishment of the North-West

Mounted Police in 1873 guaranteed the safety of Prairie residents; and the creation of the Department of the Interior in 1873 attracted hard-working immigrants to the region. (Gagnon 2012)

As noted in his first letter, the family undertakes an arduous journey from Montreal, their ship obviously taking the usual route up the St. Lawrence River, all the way to the North-West Territories where, just three years prior to their arrival, in 1882, the federal government created four "provisional districts" – Alberta, Assiniboia, Athabasca and Saskatchewan, designed "for the convenience of settlers and for postal purposes" (Friesen 2017). After travelling for days and crossing around 3000 kilometres of prairies, they reach Assiniboia, their destination of choice, where the government offered free 160 acre homesteads, and settle at Red Jacket (identified as T14 R32 W by Dave Obee), the settlement which never developed into a town unlike nearby Moosomin. All the difference was probably made by the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1882, when Moosomin was established as the first Saskatchewan community on 'steel,' "and by 1884 the community had grown to include five general stores, five hotels, two livery stables, two blacksmiths, a doctor, a lawyer, butcher, and one printer, among other businesses" (Moosomin). The Town of Moosomin is located in southeastern Saskatchewan 15 km west of the Manitoba border (Herperger) which helps locate the farm, since the farmer gives his last letter to a trader who will deliver it to Moosomin Station.

When the farmer's wife Lucille dies four years later before turning fifty, we learn that they have fourteen children which, with their British origin, makes them ethnically 'desirable' by Canadian immigration agencies. Despite "distinct ethno-cultural pockets," the desire to preserve and protect Canada's 'British-ness' (Gagnon) is continually maintained, resulting in the dominant white Anglo-Saxon presence in Canada and producing a kind of superiority attitude, so Lucille never befriended her closest neighbours of German and Swedish origin. The desirability of the Dutch, Germans and Swedes is accounted for by Gagnon in terms of their agricultural prowess, hearty work ethics, cleanliness and sobriety. Indeed, the Swedish neighbor makes a coffin for Lucille efficiently and free of charge while his wife brings them breads and stews and the German ladies clean the house and help them. The funeral is attended by their Catholic and Lutheran neighbours as well as by the two young North-West Mounted Police officers they helped the winter before.

All in all, the reader gets a fine sketch of a settler family living on their distant farm in Saskatchewan with the usual epic experiences: long journeys, harsh winters, relative poverty, tragic deaths, hard work, and ultimately success. In his third and last letter, the farmer brother can finally share the happy news with his sister: "The wheat was plentiful this year and the prices fair" (Langlois 2015: 51). The harvest was very good, so everybody gets new clothes, the pantry is

full, and “the long hoped-for bounty” (Langlois 2015: 51) raises his spirits immensely. Despite the loss of his wife and the eldest son who drowned at sea, the narrator feels that his American Dream has come true: “As I have written, the land is at last yielding us some profit, and I have hopes our continued industry and determination will see us to greater, though still modest, prosperity in the coming harvests” (Langlois 2015: 52). In the manner of an exemplary self-made man, the narrator embodies the grand narrative of emancipation. An English merchant dreaming of prosperity sets sail to the Promised Land and through his own industry and determination liberates himself from economic depravity of his homeland, and carves a new home for his family in the virginal territories of Canada:

I confess I too, in spite of all the losses and hardships we have endured, have grown to love this soil ... I have instead discovered a new ocean, one of blue skies and swaying gold, and green. I have discovered my home. (Langlois 2015: 52)

This poetic confession illustrates Aden’s idea that at the end of symbolic journeys, “of moving forward, of making things better in the future” (Aden 2007: 2), there are places like Red Jacket which stand for the Promised Land where ultimate fulfillment is found. The Promised Land at the end of the grand narrative of progress and emancipation in “The Emigrants” takes the form of the sacred garden with “a warm sun and cloudless blue sky, with green and golden fields all around” (Aden 2007: 44-45) where “your nephews are growing strong with hard work, fresh air and sunshine, and your nieces lovelier by the day as every breath fills their lungs with Nature’s raw beauty” (Aden 2007: 45), as the narrator describes it to his sister. The allegorical journey of the spirit in search of the Promised Land ends up in an earthly paradise where the self-sacrifice is rewarded and satisfaction becomes permanent. Aden sums it up: “As part of the habitus, these promised lands are rhetorical visions of naturalized history and thus, for many people, still powerful visions today (they are home)” (Aden 2007: 19). For this reason, the narrator refuses to think about going back to England, the old place by the sea losing all the appeal of home which is now firmly attached to the newly found garden of plenty in Saskatchewan. The pre-modern discourses, according to Katarzyna Stemplewska-Żakowicz, “can be considered fundamentalist: universal enforcement of ‘the Truth’ guarantees an ideal social order at costs which are unanimously considered ‘just’ and must be borne by advocates of this and different truths alike” (Stemplewska-Żakowicz 2000: 80). The narrator endorses these views in his lived reality, and however gentle his nature, he firmly holds onto his new truth: he has discovered his home.

Lyotard acknowledges the significance of the grand narrative in the pre-modern times but contends that it has lost its credibility (37) in our postmodern times. The second narrative strand in Langlois’s story challenges this contention.

3.2 Terraforming Mars: "Of being home"

In 2042 a crew of twenty is sent to terraform Mars, and then, after five years, completely abandoned by Headquarters. By 2070 only one person is still living, a female psychologist-turned-astronaut, who is making plans for her own last moments, herself being about 70. This is, most briefly, the plot of the other narrative line of "The Emigrants," continuing and complementing the settler farmer's narrative in at least two ways: first, the psychologist is a distant descendent of the farmer, and second, the motivation that drives her to her Promised Land is the same – a grand narrative of emancipation. Again, Langlois manages in just a couple of sentences to outline the unfulfilled life of this woman:

I was forty-one when I boarded the ship that brought us here. My parents had died in a plane crash when I was still in grad school, I was ten years divorced, had no children, no siblings, and had lost touch with any remaining aunts, uncles, cousins. Lack of ties to the blue-green planet. (Langlois 2015: 50–51)

Further, she is infertile due to a hysterectomy, and though she holds a PhD in psychology, she considers herself "the most useless and unskilled of the entire group" (Langlois 2015: 43). All this explains why she was selected for the mission. Being dissatisfied with her life but not prone to suicidal thoughts, being also diligent and responsible, optimistic and curious, she was a prime candidate for the mission, lured by the advertisements "hinting at adventure and new beginnings" (Langlois 2015: 43). If self-fulfillment was not possible where she was, on Earth, she would board the ship to the Promised Land to start her journey of emancipation from everything that prevents her from governing herself (Lyotard 1979: 35). The only difference in comparison to her distant settler relative is that the grand narrative of emancipation in the 21st century is intrinsically coupled with the grand narrative of speculation, or "the discourse on the legitimation of scientific discourse" (Lyotard 1979: 33).

To clarify: the present moment may be remembered in human history for the prevalent legitimation of new scientific discourse, as noticed by Fredric Jameson in his Foreword to *The Postmodern Condition*:

Is this moment of advanced industrial society a structural variant of classical capitalism or a mutation and the dawning of a wholly new social structure in which, as Daniel Bell and other theoreticians of the concept of a properly "postindustrial society" have argued, it is now science, knowledge, technological research, rather than industrial production and the extraction of surplus value, that is the "ultimately determining instance"? (Jameson 1979: XIII)

The answer is probably given by the so called Billionaire Space Race run by space entrepreneurs, the wealthiest persons on the planet. Elon Musk owns SpaceX, Richard Branson owns Virgin Galactic, and Jeff Bezos owns Blue

Origin. “Bezos is currently worth \$130 billion, Musk is worth \$22.2 billion, and Branson is worth \$4.9 billion, according to Forbes,” (Clifford 2018). Their alleged interests are different: to drive down the cost of space travel by building reusable rockets, to develop reusable ‘space planes’ to take tourists and other payloads on brief trips to sub-orbital space, or to send crewed flights to Mars and eventually colonise the Red Planet (Cheetham 2018). Evidently, their capital is being invested in science, knowledge, and technological research, and the question is no longer speculative, “what if the Moon and Mars were colonized;” rather it is now only the question of time, “when will this happen.”

These titans of entrepreneurship (Clifford 2018) have started a new narrative of scientific legitimization justified by space breakthroughs allegedly for the sake of humanity. Elon Musk is the most outspoken of the three, warning about the dangers of IT technology and WWII:

It’s important to get a self-sustaining base ideally on Mars, because Mars is far enough away from Earth that the Mars base is more likely to survive than a moon base ... But I think a moon base and a Mars base that could perhaps regenerate life back here on Earth would be really important. (Chow 2018)

Since the alleged goal is the preservation of the seed of human civilization, astronomical investments are backed up by ever new technological successes: reusable engines are being created and tested, the first commercially developed capsule launched on March 2, 2019, the first cargo mission to Mars planned for 2022, and the second mission, with both cargo and crew, is targeted for 2024 (Musk 2018), when it will plant the first self-sustaining Mars base. Elon Musk himself, in the manner of early explorers, also promises to be the first man to die there, adding in his laconic style, “just not on impact” (Cheetham 2018). Therefore, humanity may soon witness promotional posters and “advertisements hinting at adventure and new beginnings” (Langlois 2015: 43) going up all over the town, and luring people to the uncharted territory of Mars. The timeframe of “The Emigrants” fits nicely in the possible timeline for the first settler mission to Mars, being more realistic than the projections of SpaceX. The sad destiny of the crew in the story is also very convincing since the very first attempt at colonizing Mars can hardly be successful, taking into account all the failures accompanying launchings so far. Nevertheless, a new grand narrative is born to stay, considering the bleak prospects for the future of our planet.

Many reports on the condition of the earth indicate some major emerging concerns. In 2016 Dr. Fumiko Kasuga, the Future Earth Global Hub Director, warned against the abuse of science and technology, among other things:

In addition to unstable political situations, serious natural disasters and negative impacts of new technologies on the environment, we have to be reminded

that any kind of science and technology has a potential to be mal-used with destructive intention, so called 'dual-use.' (Kasuga 2016)

Langlois hints at this problem in "The Emigrants" by making the psychologist an eye witness of the end of the world:

Earth suddenly shone bigger and brighter than I had ever seen it before. An illusion created by the dust still floating in the meager atmosphere, I thought, but alluring nonetheless, like a candle in a distant window on a black, pre-electricity night.² Then there was a moment when awe and wonder at the loveliness of it switched to horror as I realized what you must have done for that to happen, right before the starburst flash, brief fireball, and complete darkness. (Langlois 2015: 47)

There are many scenarios for the end of the world but the way Langlois's astronaut character sees it, superior technology must have been behind it, just like the technology that made it possible for her to survive so long on Mars. These are the issues that space science is solving currently: how to make self-replicating robots and space crafts, how to build facilities on Mars, how to maintain habitation there till Mars is completely terraformed. The problem is that the advances in science that result in this high state of technology can be mal-used with destructive intention, as Kasuga warns, and even lead to blowing up the entire planet, however unlikely it may now seem. The reason the mission in the story was sent to Mars was exactly to act in advance of human extinction. The question how many people could be saved and on what basis will raise deep moral concerns and most likely cause serious conflicts in the event of imminent disaster whenever it happens, but they are not dealt with in the story. Rather, the focus is on the process of terraforming Mars, resulting in moderate success. The garden where the narrator likes to spend time is inside the capsule, therefore isolated from external influences, and used for growing mainly carrots and spinach. The wild dreams of the space billionaires are far from coming true any time soon because finding water, warming Mars, and changing the composition of its atmosphere so that it can support plant and animal life may take much longer than hoped for (even disregarding the problem of high radiation and low gravity).

Still, scientists of renown such as Michio Kaku hold it that we need to become a two planet species in order not to perish. In his latest book *The Future of Humanity* (2018), Kaku discusses all the topics that Rocket Billionaires find so exciting: terraforming Mars, interstellar travel, immortality, and our destiny

² Repeating certain motifs, Langlois further connects the two narratives in an unobtrusive way. For example, the candles in a window, blankets, and carrots are mentioned in both, as if to support the idea that the great narratives of humanity have similar concerns with survival, caregiving and comfort.

beyond Earth. This book is part of the narrative of scientific legitimation unwittingly supporting the views of Fredric Jameson: “The great master-narratives here are those that suggest that something beyond capitalism is possible, something radically different” (Jameson 1979: xix). A new space economy is taking roots as we speak and involving humanity in a new story of exploration. As Kaku sees it, “In some sense, the spirit of exploration is in our genes and hardwired in our soul” (Kaku 2018: 6). Perhaps driven by this genetic propensity, mankind cannot refrain from abandoning the old habitat and searching for the new Promised Land, thereby participating in and living a new master narrative. A new home to be found on Mars is idealized as much as the American Wild West, and lying in the circle among her dead colleagues, the female astronaut feels quite content: “Here, in my part of the mandala, I feel only a sense of belonging, of being in my rightful place. Of being home” (51). Her sincerity and hopefulness regarding her situation make her a metamodern character.

4. Conclusion: Towards Metamodernism

Both narratives of “The Emigrants” illustrate the power and perseverance of grand narratives. It is reasonable to assume that the rise of the present human civilization coincided with the first metanarrative instinctively created to set mankind on the path of progress, understood as constant change and advancement. The Promised Land as metanarrative, therefore, resurfaces along with other grand narratives throughout our known history, and though it may have gone underground during the short period called postmodernism, it is now in full swing again. The locus of desire is changed and Mars is becoming the next destination for eager travellers. In this context, Colette Langlois in “The Emigrants” recognizes variations in the grand narrative of the Promised Land, and the fact that her story was awarded as the best short story in 2015 in a way signals an acknowledgment of this theme. In fact, the story can be read as belonging in the new movement that has set in at the turn of the century, clearly identified by Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker in 2010 and named metamodernism.

The proponents of metamodernism indirectly argue that Lyotard was not right when he claimed that the grand narrative has lost its credibility. Luke Turner, for example, holds that “the discourse surrounding metamodernism engages with the resurgence of sincerity, hope, romanticism, affect, and the potential for grand narratives and universal truths, whilst not forfeiting all that we’ve learnt from postmodernism” (Turner 2015). Terraforming Mars as the new metanarrative of the Promised Land demonstrates many of the metamodern elements which oscillate between modernism and postmodernism, and “embrace doubt, as well as hope and melancholy, sincerity and irony, affect and apathy, the personal

and the political, and technology and techne" (Levin 2012). It turns out that Lyotard's skepticism was not well grounded since the new master narrative was coming into being while he was writing his *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. As Vermeulen and van den Akker point in their "Notes on Metamodernism," a new sensibility was emerging at that time characterised by an interest for fictional elsewhere, a yearning for utopias, use of tropes of mysticism, enthusiasm as well as irony, and a kind of informed naivety, a pragmatic idealism. As a new Techne, the goddess of art, craft and technical skill, the narrator of the second story embodies many of these traits. She left the earth "to pursue a horizon that is forever receding" (Vermeulen, Van der Akker 325), yearning for a better world than the one she left behind and living a kind of pragmatic idealism in its simplest form. She is enthusiastic and hopeful in view of the possibility that some ships from the earth may be coming towards Mars which is at the same time ironic since she deliberately left the earth to start a new life in the cosmic Promised Land. Finally, she turns to what is commonly seen as mysticism when she makes a circle of the dead bodies of her colleagues and lies between them to form a full mandala and contemplate the universe. It is ironic that on Mars she resorts to eastern philosophy and finds solace in the forms of belief which were available to her on the earth as well. "What matters is that it is our contemporary culture that enables these visions; or rather, that opens up the discourse of having a vision at all," to quote Vermeulen and van den Akker (2019). This still emerging structure of feeling, this new sensibility composed of various elements but centred on a vision whose form can be the Promised Land is what Collette Langlois's story imaginatively illustrates. Metamodernism is proving that mankind has always depended on metanarratives and that, for once, Lyotard was not right.

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